

Amendments to the Claims:

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. – 15. (Canceled)

16. (New) A route guidance method for providing route guidance by exchanging information related to a recommended route from a start point to a destination between an information terminal and an information distribution center, comprising in sequence:

(a) a step in which the information terminal transmits information indicating the start point and the destination to the information distribution center;

(b) a step in which the information distribution center obtains route guide information for a route from the start point to the destination through a search calculation;

(c) a step in which when a state of communication between the information terminal and the information distribution center is poor, the information distribution center splits results of the search calculation and transmits the search calculation results to the information terminal in installments; and

(d) a step in which when the search calculation results are transmitted in installments, the information terminal starts the route guidance upon receiving, at least, search calculation results corresponding to an area near the start point.

17. (New) A route guidance method for providing route guidance by engaging an information terminal that transmits information indicating a start point and a destination to an information distribution center and the information distribution center that obtains through a search calculation route guide information for a route from the start point to the destination, splits results of the search calculation and transmits the search calculation results to the information terminal in installments when a predetermined condition exists, comprising in sequence:

(a) a step in which a user is informed of an estimated download time for downloading the search calculation results, determined based upon a physical quantity indicating a size of the search calculation results;

(b) a step in which the information terminal transmits to the information distribution center information indicating an instruction by the user that the information distribution center splits the search calculation results and transmits the search calculation results in installments;

(c) a step in which upon receiving the information indicating the instruction by the user that the search calculation results be split and transmitted in installments, the information distribution center extracts search

calculation results corresponding to an area near the start point from the search calculation results and transmits the extracted search calculation results; and

(d) a step in which upon receiving the search calculation results corresponding to the area near the start point, the information terminal starts the route guidance.

18. (New) A route guidance method according to claim 17, wherein:

the search calculation results include route information of the route from the start point to the destination and guide information used to indicate an advancing direction and the like at each guide point on the route.

19. (New) A route guidance method according to claim 18, wherein:

the search calculation results corresponding to the area near the start point include at least guide information for a block extending from the start point to a next guide point.

20. (New) A route guidance method according to claim 17, wherein:

the physical quantity indicates a data size of the guide information or a number of guide points contained in the guide information.

21. (New) A route guidance method according to claim 17, wherein:

after starting the route guidance, the information terminal transmits to the information distribution center a request for remaining guide information.

22. (New) A route guidance method according to claim 21, wherein:

the information terminal transmits to the information distribution center a request that the remaining guide information be distributed in units each corresponding to a guide point; and

each time the request is received, the information distribution center transmits guide information extracted in a unit corresponding to a guide point to the information terminal.

23. (New) A route guidance method for providing route guidance by exchanging information related to a recommended route from a start point to a destination between an information terminal and an information distribution center, comprising in sequence:

(a) a step in which the information terminal transmits information indicating the start point and the destination to the information distribution center;

(b) a step in which the information distribution center obtains route guide information for a route from the start point to the destination through a search calculation;

(c) a step in which when a distance between the start point and the destination is equal to or greater than a predetermined value, the information distribution center splits results of the search calculation and transmits the search calculation results to the information terminal in installments; and

(d) a step in which when the search calculation results are transmitted in installments, the information terminal starts the route guidance upon receiving, at least, search calculation results corresponding to an area near the start point.

24. (New) A route guidance method for providing route guidance by exchanging information related to a recommended route from a start point to a destination between an information terminal and an information distribution center, comprising in sequence:

(a) a step in which the information terminal transmits information indicating the start point and the destination to the information distribution center;

(b) a step in which the information distribution center obtains route guide information for a route from the start point to the destination through a search calculation;

(c) a step in which when a communication device with a data transmission speed equal to or lower than a predetermined value is connected to the information terminal, the information distribution center splits results of the search calculation and transmits the search calculation results to the information terminal in installments; and

(d) a step in which when the search calculation results are transmitted in installments, the information terminal starts the route guidance upon receiving, at least, search calculation results corresponding to an area near the start point.

25. (New) A route guidance method for providing route guidance by exchanging information related to a recommended route from a start point to a destination between an information terminal and an information distribution center, comprising in sequence:

(a) a step in which the information terminal transmits information indicating the start point and the destination to the information distribution center;

(b) a step in which the information distribution center obtains route guide information for a route from the start point to the destination through a search calculation;

(c) a step in which the information distribution center transmits to the information terminal route information contained in results of the search calculation in a batch and transmits guide information contained in the results of the search calculation to the information terminal in installments by splitting the guide information; and

(d) a step in which the information terminal starts the route guidance upon receiving the route information included in the search calculation results and at least guide information for an area near the start point included in the search calculation results and transmitted in an installment.